

# New Bedford Harbor New Bedford, MA

U.S. EPA | HAZARDOUS WASTE PROGRAM AT EPA NEW ENGLAND



**THE SUPERFUND PROGRAM** protects human health and the environment by investigating and cleaning up often-abandoned hazardous waste sites and engaging communities throughout the process. Many of these sites are complex and need long-term cleanup actions. Those responsible for contamination are held liable for cleanup costs. EPA strives to return previously contaminated land and groundwater to productive use.

## SITE DESCRIPTION:

The U.S. EPA has been committed to the New Bedford Harbor (NBH) cleanup since the 1980s, following discovery of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in sediment and fish and designation to the national priority list of Superfund sites in 1983. In 1998, EPA proposed a dredging remedy for the Upper and Lower harbors, and full scale dredging started in 2004. Remediation is ongoing, with dredging typically occurring in the summer. In 2009, EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson announced the availability of recovery act funds to help speed up the current cleanup timeframe for the harbor cleanup.

## PARTNERING

As part of the NBH site monitoring, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection has conducted annual fish and shellfish sampling to determine whether PCB concentrations in NBH fish and shellfish are declining as a result of cleanup activities. In general, PCB concentrations have indeed decreased from the 1980s to the present in most species, although concerns remain as discussed herein. Fish and shellfish sampling will continue throughout the cleanup efforts, and updates to this fact sheet will be issued as appropriate.

## ASSESSMENT

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) has also had extensive involvement with NBH in order to address a variety of health concerns. In 1979, MDPH promulgated state regulations prohibiting the consumption of any fish/shellfish in Area 1 of NBH; of bottom feeding fish (eel, scup, flounder, and tautog) or lobster in Area 2; and lobster in Area 3 (see attached map). These early efforts were followed by human epidemiological studies of PCB exposure via fish consumption by MDPH and others. MDPH has additional advice for sensitive populations (pregnant women, nursing mothers, children under age 12, women who may become pregnant) that

can be found at [www.mass.gov/dph/fishadvisories](http://www.mass.gov/dph/fishadvisories). EPA supports this additional advice, and notes that its updated risk assessment (discussed below) recommends that sensitive populations avoid fish, shellfish and lobster from the three closure areas in NBH (see map on reverse) except that shellfish from Area 3 and Clark's cove may safely be consumed by these sensitive populations if limited to one meal per month.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

As part of the Superfund process, EPA is required to conduct risk assessments that will result in cleanup levels that the selected remedy for a given site must meet. These risk assessments use conservative (health-protective) assumptions to ensure that even sensitive populations will not have health concerns following completion of remediation activities. In the case of NBH and the risk assessment conducted on fish/shellfish in the closed areas of the harbor, EPA's updated evaluation indicates that some species not currently covered by the 1979 state regulations may present health concerns for recreational fishermen and shell fishermen (and/or their families/friends who consume their take) if these species are consumed in larger quantities than current epidemiological data

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## GENERAL INFO:

### EPA NEW ENGLAND

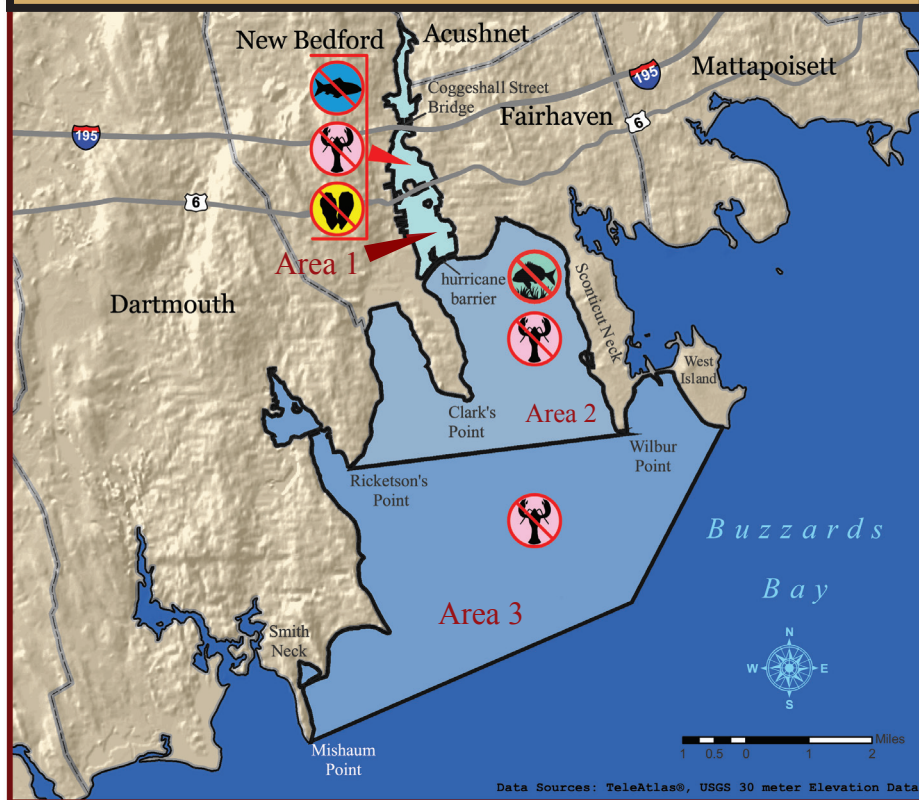
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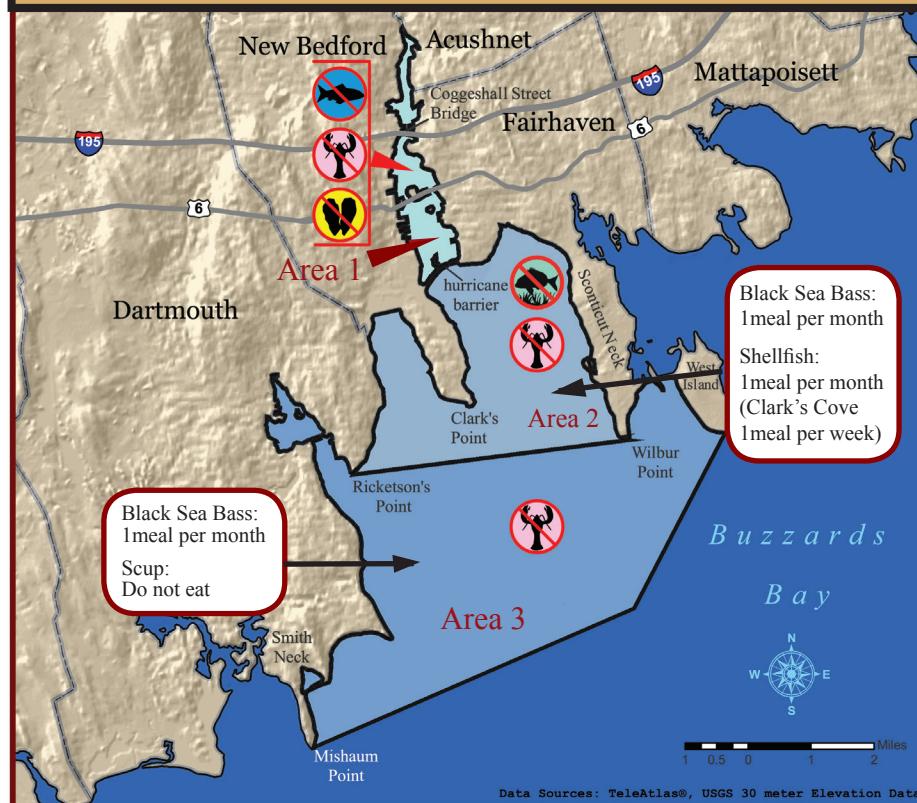
[www.epa.gov/ne/nbh](http://www.epa.gov/ne/nbh)

Original Fishing Ban (in effect 1979–present)  
per Massachusetts Department of Public Health



Updated 2010 EPA Recommendations for Recreational Fishermen/Shellfishermen  
per Superfund Risk Assessment with additional species highlighted\*

\*sensitive populations—see reverse for more information



**Do NOT eat shellfish**  
No coma mariscos  
Não coma mariscos



**Do NOT eat fish**  
No coma pescado  
Não coma peixe



**Do NOT eat lobster**  
No coma langosta  
Não coma lagosta



**Do NOT eat bottom feeding fish:**  
No coma pescado de fundo:  
Não coma peixe de fundo:

• flounder  
• lenguado  
• solha

• tautog  
• tautoga  
• bodião da ostra

• scup  
• sargo  
• sargo

• eel  
• anguila  
• anguila

continued from front >> suggest. EPA believes it is important that recreational fishermen and shellfishermen be aware that the risk assessment suggests that: consumption of black sea bass be limited to one meal per month if they are obtained in Areas 2 and 3; that scup not be consumed from Areas 2 or 3; and that general guidelines for shellfish include limiting consumption to one meal a month in Area 2 and one meal a week in Area 3. See map above for a summary of EPA's recommendations.

It is important to recognize the substantial benefits of fish consumption for everyone. Fish is one of the best sources of fatty acids which are helpful in reducing the risk of heart disease. In order to avoid exposure to a harmful level of contaminants, people should choose a variety of fish and shellfish from a variety of sources.



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